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ABSTRACT

The Freshmen Preventive Intervention Program had as its objectives for students the development of greater emotional maturity, more successful adaptation to the college community, less psychological disability, and fewer dropouts in the freshman class. By means of an interactive process using special questionnaires, the participating students were provided with membership in a group which had psychological reality, were given some reference facts with which to compare themselves, were provided an avenue for expressing their reactions to the university, were given some intellectual tools by which they might better understand the stresses acting upon them and their reactions to these stresses, were provided formalized opportunities to think through their own beliefs, and were provided an additional resource person to talk to in the event of some crisis. Evaluation of the pilot project was generally favorable. Suggestions are given for an improved program. (Author/HS)

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A UNIVERSITY FRESHMAN PREVENTIVE INTERVENTION PROGRAM: REPORT OF A PILOT PROJECT

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Abstract

A preventive intervention program with university freshmen is described and evaluated. This project had as its objectives the development of greater emotional maturity, more successful adaptation to the college community, less psychological disability and fewer dropouts. By means of an interactive process using special questionnaires which were distributed and analyzed, the participating students were provided with membership in a group which had psychological reality, were given some reference facts with which to compare themselves, were provided an avenue for expressing their reactions to the university, were given some intellectual tools by which they might better understand the stresses acting upon them and their reactions to these stresses, were provided formalized opportunities to think through their own beliefs, and were provided one additional resource person to talk with in the event of some crisis. Evaluation of the pilot project was generally favorable although differences between the experimental and a comparison group were not large, even when statistically significant. Suggestions for an improved program are given.

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A UNIVERSITY FRESHMAN PREVENTIVE INTERVENTION PROGRAM: REPORT OF A PILOT PROJECT

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The unusual vulnerability of college freshmen to stresses induced in them during the early months in college is well known. Freshmen commonly bring unsolved problems with them. Cassell, Marty and Richman (1967), for example, have shown that a large percentage of entering freshmen at Syracuse University recall experiencing difficulties such as depression, anxiety, irritability and insomnia during the preceeding three years. While about five percent of the student body seek psychiatric help each year and between 10 and 20% of students seek psychiatric help at some point in their college career (see Baker, 1965) the incidence of help-seeking is unusually high among freshmen. Whittington (1963) reports that freshmen and sophomores are overrepresented among the patients at the Mental Health Clinic at the University of Kansas. Segal, Walsh, and Weiss (1966) present evidence to suggest that the prevalence of emotional maladjustment in freshmen is increasing. Drop-out rate, as reported by Curtis and Curtis (1966) is twice as high for freshmen (22%) as for seniors (11%). Gardner and Glaser (1968) suggest that freshmen constitute a specific high-risk group and have proposed a series of programs for providing meaningful interventions to assist them.

In reviewing the findings of his studies with Stanford and Berkeley undergraduates, Katz comments "Our study has impressed us with the

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importance of the freshman year, particularly its early phases. The entering student faces many sudden challenges and threats: separation from home, sudden exposure to large groups of strangers who may seem threatening or superior, new academic demands .... It seems very desirable that colleges divert their best resources to the problems of the freshman" (1968, pp. 432-3). One way of allocating resources to deal with the problems of emotional maladjustment and high drop-out rate is to develop preventively-oriented programs specifically aimed at this high-risk group.

In a recent survey of current issues in the provision of campus community mental health services (Bloom, 1970) the desire to provide preventive services was clearly documented. More than 90% of the respondents to the survey, representing psychiatric clinics in campus student health centers, counseling programs, and other types of mental health-related campus agencies in 75 Western universities, believed that preventive services designed to reduce the incidence of emotional disorders on the campus are at least as important, if not more important, than direct clinical services. Almost as high a proportion of respondents believed that a university mental health program should deploy a significant proportion of its resources in working with normal students; that is, with students who do not present psychiatric problems but rather want to become more self-actualizing and productive. Yet the survey also revealed a substantial discrepancy between these desirable program characteristics and programs as they were actually functioning. All respondents agreed, for example, that activities designed to identify stress inducing aspects

of the university community and then to reduce them are a necessary part of a well-functioning university mental health program. But more than 70% of these respondents indicated that their program was not providing this type of preventive intervention. Nearly all respondents believed that a well-functioning campus community mental health program should have an active consultation service, yet more than half of the respondents indicated that their own programs did not include consultation services. Virtually all respondents believed that efforts should be made to study the distribution of emotional disorders in the entire university community and to try to identify possible determinants of these disorders, yet fewer than 30% indicated that their program allocated any appreciable resources for this task.

In reviewing the concepts which have been emerging regarding the primary prevention of emotional disorders, two complimentary approaches have been suggested. Caplan refers to these approaches as social action and interpersonal action. "The first of these aims to produce changes in the community; the second has the goal of changing particular individuals" (Caplan, 1964, p. 56). Under the second type of approach, he includes preparation for coping with crises (anticipatory guidance), assistance to people in crisis (crisis intervention) and mental health consultation to care-givers. The consultation strategy is based on the premise that mental health manpower cannot hope to interact meaningfully with large enough numbers of the vulnerable population directly. Rather, mental health professionals should identify mediating groups and agencies who do work directly with the population at risk and try to assist these groups

in providing more effective mental health-related services. The crisis intervention strategy is based on the premise that mental health professionals can work directly with the population at risk if they choose wisely how and when to provide therapeutically oriented services. According to proponents of crisis intervention, there are particular times in each person's life when his customary methods of stress reduction and problem resolution do not function adequately. At these critical moments, always of relatively brief duration, the opportunity is present for a brief intervention which can result in a significant contribution to that person's emotional adjustment. The anticipatory guidance strategy is based on the premise that emotional disorders can be prevented and emotional maturity enhanced by helping people in anticipation of crises. Such help can prepare the recipient group for oncoming critical moments and can teach techniques of crisis management. Anticipatory guidance programs can rely on mental health education concepts and the use of mass media, or can rely on face-to-face contacts, usually in group settings, between the mental health professional and members of the vulnerable population (see Bloom, 1969). The present project is an example of anticipatory guidance, in this case with college freshmen.

Description of the Pilot Project

The pilot project which was named "Cohort '72" was inaugurated in the Fall of 1968 and had three interrelated objectives. The first objective was to learn something about the developmental personality changes which take place during the four years of a young person's life starting with

the time he begins his college career. The second objective was to learn about the university as seen through the eyes of the college student. The third objective was to develop an ongoing process with a defined group of college students so that learning about them and about their views of the university could be interactive, that is, so that the research findings could be fed back to the participating students in a manner which students would find growth-inducing and stress-reducing. It was hoped that this interactive process would result in greater emotional maturity, more successful adaptation to the college community, less psychological disability, and fewer dropouts. A group of 207 volunteer freshmen was identified at the start of the 1968-1969 academic year. This group, identified prospectively, constituted a "cohort" as this term is used in the field of epidemiology, and was, of course, a sample of the class of 1972. The research project derived its name from these two facts. At the same time, a second considerably larger group of freshmen was identified and served as a comparison population.

Information was collected by means of questionnaires sent to members of the cohort by campus or U.S. mail. The timing of the questionnaires, their general themes, and specific items had been derived partly from an exploratory project during the preceeding year when the author and two graduate students met with three groups of freshmen weekly during the Fall semester to learn about the lives of these 36 students, and how and when crises appeared to be produced. Based upon these meetings and a review of much of the published literature on the subject of college student mental health a series of questionnaires were designed and administered during

orientation week to the entire freshman class and at key times during the year; after one month in college, (response N = 207), after Christmas vacation (response N = 198), shortly after the start of the second semester (response N = 188), and just before final examinations in the second semester (response N = 155 and 151). Progress reports were issued at irregular times based upon analyses of these questionnaire responses.

The process of preventive intervention was based on a number of principles fundamental to the project. First, data collection and dissemination techniques had to be inexpensive. This principle was invoked primarily because of the conviction that the project, should it successfully achieve its objectives, ought to be suitable, in whole or part, at other universities regardless of their resources. The second principle was that the participating students had as much to give to the project as to get from it. The communications between students and project director were clearly two-way. Some data collection forms and many particular items were suggested by students. Students were asked to evaluate the forms and the feed-back and changes were made on the basis of these evaluations. In general, the intervention aspect of the project was an ongoing process between a group of students and a faculty member interested in learning and in helping. Students were invited to visit with the author and a few did--often because of some crisis in their lives.

The third principle was that students, accustomed to learning by reading, could profit from the opportunity to read selected articles on topics relevant to project objectives. Students were asked for suggestions regarding topics they might be interested in reading about,

When articles were found which it was thought might be informative and interesting, permission was sought to reproduce and distribute these articles free of charge to participating students. Reactions to these articles were solicited from students. The first such article was distributed in December. Subsequent articles were distributed in February, March, April, and May. In all, six articles were distributed dealing with mental health on the college campus, campus unrest, and human sexuality in college-aged persons. The fourth principle was that the type of feed-back the students would receive should be related to the process of receiving the feed-back. Since reports to participating students were in the form of statements sent via the mail, it was decided that they should not be individualized. The reports gave information about the entire cohort, typically in terms of percentages of males and females responding to items in a certain manner. Another type of report quoted back to cohort members comments they made about their experiences during Christmas vacation. In this report, students were identified only by sex and by in-state or out-of-state residential status.

The fifth principle was that a continuing regular therapeutic relationship would not be established with any member of the cohort. An adequate array of therapeutically oriented facilities existed on the campus and the strategy of the project, aimed as it was toward preventive intervention by anticipatory guidance militated against the establishment of long-term therapeutic relationships. Students were, however, invited to drop in to visit with the author and from time to time, when information obtained from them suggested it, a single appointment was scheduled

with a specific cohort member. Finally, as a sixth general principle, for purposes of program evaluation, an effort was made to follow all members of the cohort regardless of whether they remained on the campus as students in good standing. It became clear as students left the university that follow-up was going to be time consuming. Two facts became apparent quite soon after the follow-up of students was begun. First, students welcomed this contact with the project, and second, contact by letter was virtually useless in obtaining information from students. Students are apparently poor letter writers however interested they are in maintaining contact. The telephone became the technique of choice for establishing and maintaining periodic contact with students who left the campus.

The theoretical constructs which were most useful in conceptualizing the project and in planning its specific objectives and activities were related to the identification of developmental tasks which need to be accomplished during adolescence. Review of the literature suggested that students could be helped toward the completion of five major tasks, (1) the development of independence as well as appropriate interdependence, (2) the ability to recognize and deal with uncertainty, (3) the development of a personal set of values and standards which might or might not reflect the values and standards of peers or parents, (4) the development of a sense of sexual identity and of satisfaction with one's own masculinity or femininity, and (5) the development of mature interpersonal relationships and social skills. While these conceptualizations are primarily identified with the work of Erikson (1950), further elaborations of these

developmental tasks have been made by Andrews (1967), Blaine and McArthur (1961), Chickering (1967), Farnsworth (1966), Sanford (1962), and Whittington (1963) among others.

The project was designed to accomplish its objectives by providing membership in a group which had psychological, if not physical reality, thus reducing feelings of isolation, by giving group members some reference facts with which to compare themselves, thus reducing feelings of uniqueness, by providing an avenue for them to express their reactions to the university, by giving them some intellectual tools by which they might better understand the stresses acting upon them and their reactions to these stresses, by providing formalized opportunities (through completing questionnaires) to think through their own beliefs, and by providing one additional resource person to talk with in the event of some crisis.

During the freshman orientation period prior to the start of academic year 1968-1969, a 29-item yes-no questionnaire was completed by the entire entering class. The items had been developed following a review of research attempting to identify factors associated with emotional disorder in college students (Examples: Will the freshman year be your first extended stay away from your home and your family? Do you find that some of your present attitudes don't make sense to you? Are you often nervous or tense? Do you feel that you need a lot of reassurance?). Volunteers to the project were solicited from freshmen who had completed this questionnaire and who were living in one large dormitory complex. A large comparison group was randomly selected from freshmen who had completed the

questionnaire who were living in other residence halls. In obtaining volunteers for the project, they were given two promises, the questionnaires would not require more than an hour a month of their time, and after each questionnaire study they would be given feed-back reports.

The volunteers were obtained during the last two weeks of September and the first report and questionnaire were mailed together on October 10. The report welcomed volunteers to the project, reviewed for them what we had learned to be the major developmental tasks of the adolescent, and introduced the 46-item questionnaire to them (entitled "The First Month") which was designed to learn about their initial reactions to the university and to get some estimate as to how each of the students was dealing with these developmental tasks (Examples: I find I miss my parents and home more than I thought I would. Since coming to college, I have been in several social situations where I have felt very uncomfortable. I feel much less sure of myself than I did last summer. I am already beginning to feel quite independent compared to last year.). On this and all subsequent questionnaires, students were allowed to check one of four boxes after each item, "very true for me," "mostly true for me," "mostly untrue for me," or "very untrue for me." Of the 213 students who had volunteered for the project 207 replies were received. These 207 students were designated as the cohort who would be followed prospectively to study the effects of the anticipatory guidance program.

In November, just prior to Thanksgiving recess, the second progress report was distributed. This report analyzed the replies of the cohort to the 29-item questionnaire administered during the freshman orientation

period and indicated the percent of males and females answering "yes" to each item. (Examples: Will the freshman year be your first extended stay away from your home and family? Males: 56%; Females: 57%. Do you find that some of your present attitudes don't make sense to you? Males: 58%; Females: 55%. Are you often nervous and tense? Males: 36%; Females 44%. Do you feel that you need a lot of reassurance? Males: 36%; Females: 42%.) Other analyses of the data were also provided and the report ended with these statements: "We can conclude from this analysis of your responses to the first questionnaire that you have your fair share of problems, uncertainties, and hang-ups. Nearly every one of you admits to certain self-doubts and I think that's what one would expect from a group of freshmen, if they were telling you what was really on their minds. Those of you who are worried about yourselves can see from this analysis that you are by no means alone."

On December 10, the first article was distributed along with an explanatory letter indicating that articles in the general area of student mental health appear from time to time and that this article was being sent as an example. The article was entitled "The Student and Mental Health: An Interview with Seymour Halleck, M.D." and appeared in the September, 1968 issue of Wisconsin Alumnus. Cohort members were asked to indicate if they had suggestions for other topics to read about. At the same time thanks were extended to those students who had commented on the earlier progress report. About 20 students had written comments, uniformly favorable.

On January 7, 1969, a 47-item "Post-Vacation Questionnaire" was distributed. The cohort members were told, in the introduction to the questionnnaire, that in our previous discussions with freshmen we had been impressed with the fact that Christmas vacation experiences were often surprising and quite meaningful; indicating how much they had changed since September. This questionnaire was designed to identify some of these experiences and changes and at the same time to get a general idea of how school was going so far. (Examples: I managed to get a lot of school work done over Christmas vacation. I think I am making out at school at least as well as other people who are freshmen that I talked to on vacation. I found myself missing college and college friends while on vacation. My parents treated me as a real adult during the vacation. I found myself wanting to argue more with parents and friends than I used to last September. I have enjoyed most of my courses and teachers so far.) The last page of the questionnaire was nearly empty and cohort members were invited to make any other comments about school or the vacation or the cohort project. A total of 198 replies were received from cohort members, among which were 70 written (often quite detailed) comments.

On February 6, the third progress report was distributed, entitled "A Cluster Structure Analysis of The First Month Questionnaire". This report identified the six clusters of items which had been found in the analysis of the replies to that questionnaire and labeled the clusters in order of statistical importance, as Satisfaction With Present Beliefs and Values, Feeling of Independence, Difficulty in Forming New Friendships,

College-Related Adjustment, Self-Confidence, and Freedom From Homesickness. A brief discussion of cluster analysis was also included.

On February 12, about two weeks after the start of the second semester, a 78-item questionnaire was distributed entitled "First Semester General Evaluation." This questionnaire was subdivided into several sections and allowed students to indicate thier reactions to the first semester. The sections included Academic Experiences, Dormitory Evaluation, Social and Liesure-Time Activities, Fraternities and Sororities, Finances, Relationships with Parents, Vocational Choice, Evaluation of University Agencies, and Self-Evaluation. A total of 188 replies were received. As an indication of the apparent involvement of the cohort members in the project, the identical First Semester General Evaluation was distributed with a different covering letter to 400 members of the comparison group. About 30% of the questionnaires were completed and returned. A follow-up letter along with another copy of the questionnaire was mailed to those comparison group students who had not returned the first questionnaire, resulting in an additional 10% response. Thus, in contrast to the better than 90% return rate in the cohort, the return rate in the comparison group was only about 40%--too low for any confident generalizations to a comparison population.

In late February, an article entitled "The College Campus in 1968, published by the Southern Regional Education Board in September 1968 was distributed and a call was extended for volunteers among the cohort to complete a drug and alcohol use questionnaire. This questionnaire was not anonymous and its rationale as part of the cohort project was the

opportunity it might provide for studying the relationship of drug and alcohol utilization patterns to other known characteristics of the student group. Ultimately about 125 members of the cohort volunteered and completed the brief forms.

The fourth progress report, "Comments on the Post-Vacation Questionnaire" was distributed on March 10. This report consisted of seven pages of quotes from about 40 of the comments made by students after returning to school following Christmas vacation. (Examples: Male, out-of-state: "To be truthful, my vacation wasn't worth the plane fare. I had all kinds of plans made and not <u>one</u> was fulfilled! I had planned on some intelligent discussions with my father about civil rights, student protest, drugs and music - I never got past the first item"; Female, out-of-state: "Just one comment--so many people returned from vacation despising their parents. More people should realize how wonderful they are and not just look for signs of the "generation gap."; Female, in-state: "I feel like I have 'left the nest' since September. Now I have two homes for the first time--one where I am moderately restricted and expected to give accounts of my actions; and one where I can speak honestly about things that bother me, do whatever I want, be in charge of myself (more or less) and be whatever I want"; Male, in-state: "Overall, I feel that the vacation was valuable in resting from the academic pressures of college, and helped me get caught up in some areas of homework, but most of all it helped me to appreciate the atmosphere here at C.U.".)

Three articles were distributed to cohort members in late March and early April. The articles included "The Grim Generation" by Robert

Kavanaugh, which appeared in the October, 1968 issue of Psychology Today, and two articles on sexual behavior in the young adult which appeared in the Journal of the American College Health Association.

In May, four progress reports, two questionnaires, and one article were distributed. The progress reports all dealt with the First Semester General Evaluation and the general format of these reports was to present an analysis of student replies and then to present interpretive general observations and conclusions. The four reports each dealt with a specified area of the evaluation form, and in total presented an analysis of the entire evaluation. The two questionnaires included a 59-item questionnaire designed to study Academic Pressure (155 replies) and a 31-item questionnaire, entitled "The Last Questionnaire of the Year" which asked several questions on socio-economic background, parental attitudes toward college, and a final evaluation of the Freshman year (151 replies). The article which was distributed was written by Mary Calderone, the head of Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), was entitled, "Sexuality and the College Student, and appeared in the February, 1969 issue of the Journal of the American College Health Association. These activities in May concluded the first year of the Cohort project.

The project gradually accumulated a considerable body of information on the members of the cohort, and a smaller amount of information on the comparison group. This accumulated knowledge will be valuable for studying changes over time, for identifying student characteristics which might be predictive of adaptational difficulties, for identifying

dimensions of significance regarding these four eventful years, and for evaluating the effectiveness of the project in meeting its objectives.

All cohort members who registered for the sophomore year were contacted shortly after Fall, 1969 registration. Only about 50% of eligible students responded to the initial questionnaire. About 70% of Cohort members now lived off campus in contrast to only about 5% who lived off campus during their freshman year. Based on replies to the initial questionnaire designed to assist in planning the cohort sophomore year program, one major change was instituted. In contrast to the freshman year in which communication was as much from the students as toward the students, the sophomore year was characterized by a greater flow of reports, articles, and data toward the students. The students seemed much more mature and self-confident than they did a year earlier. Boulder had begun to seem like home, the respondents were glad to be back among old friends, school seemed harder but more interesting, courses seemed more relevant, professors seemed of higher quality, and the justification for inaugurating the project during the freshman year seemed to have largely dissipated by the start of the sophomore year. Accordingly, the sophomore year was used primarily for additional data analyses and reporting to Cohort members, with reports going out to them about once a month. All original members of the Cohort will be followed until June, 1972 by which time four years will have elapsed and Cohort members pursuing an uninterrupted normally paced college program will have graduated. Cohort members have expressed considerable interest in being followed for this time

period, and reports of these follow-up studies will be issued to them periodically.

Preliminary Evaluation of the Pilot Project

The evaluation undertaken thus far of the pilot project is limited to a comparison of survival rates at the University of Colorado into the sophomore year between the cohort and comparison group, a comparison of academic involvement in the case of students in the cohort and comparison groups no longer enrolled as full-time students, an analysis of living arrangements in the case of cohort and comparison group members no longer at the University of Colorado, an analysis of academic achievement in the case of the two groups, and an analysis of comments from cohort members about the impact of the project on them. All of the evaluations suggest that the cohort project was modestly successful in achieving its primary objectives, although differences between cohort and comparison group scores (even when statistically significant) are not large.

Because there is some evidence that survival and academic achievement is related to college of enrollment (students in the College of Engineering seem to have a more difficult time) the analyses presented here are based on students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences, a group representing about 85% of the total sample. In Table 1 will be found the

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Insert Table 1 about here

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results of the analysis of survival. All but three members of the cohort were located. All but 14 members of the comparison group were located. Students were divided into three categories; currently enrolled at the University of Colorado, transferred to full-time student status at another college or university, or dropped out (not enrolled as a full-time student at any university). As can be seen, survival rates are generally quite high but favor the cohort population. The difference is significant (t=2.6). There is no appreciable difference between the sexes in survival but women who are no longer currently enrolled at the University of Colorado tend to have dropped out, while men more likely have transferred to other schools. The difference in survival between the cohort and comparison groups is due primarily to the fact that a higher proportion of comparison group students transferred to other schools than did members of the cohort. Telephone conversations with students no longer at the University of Colorado indicated that in virtually all cases, transfer could be viewed as indicating a poor adjustment at the University. Students who transferred commented that people did not seem "genuine" at the University of Colorado, there was too much impersonality, they felt socially isolated, they were dissatisfied, the school was too large, professors were too distant, something was wrong. Of the students who dropped out, one-third were on academic suspension, slightly more than one half left for reasons related to poor emotional adjustment, and a few female students were married and were now homemakers.

Living arrangements of cohort and comparison group members are shown in Table 2. Analysis of follow-up data indicates that returning to the

parental home represents in large measure a failure of adaptation as a young independent adult. A near-significantly larger proportion of

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Insert Table 2 about here

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comparison group members no longer enrolled at C.U. were living at home at the start of the sophomore year than was the case among the cohort members (t=1.5).

Regarding continued academic involvement among students who had dropped out, the percentages again favored the cohort. Of the 20 cohort members who were no longer enrolled as full-time students, half were currently part-time students or were taking correspondence courses. Of the 72 dropouts in the comparison group, only 11 (15%) had any continuing academic involvement. This difference is significant (t=2.9).

In order to measure academic achievement a comparison was made between the earned grade point ratio during the freshman year and the predicted grade point ratio which had been derived at the start of the year based on scholastic aptitude test scores and percentile rank in the High School graduating class. This prediction expressed as the probability of a "C" average (2.00) or better is highly valid and is used in determining eligibility for certain advanced lower division courses during the freshman year. A case of underachievement was defined as when the probability of a "C" or better was between .40 and .50 and the GPR was less than 1.00 or when the probability of a "C" or better was between .50 and .99 and the GPR was below 2.00. A case of unusually high achievement

was identified when the probability of a "C" or better was below .90 and the GPR was 3.00 or above. Using these definitions, slight (non-significant) differences were found in the case of male students favoring the cohort. While 19.8% of males in the comparison group were identified as underachievers, only 16.4% of males in the cohort were underachievers. In the case of overachievement, 16.9% of males in the comparison group were so designated while 20.9% of males in the cohort group met the criterion. Figures for under and overachievement in the case of females were nearly identical in the cohort and comparison groups.

Finally, comments by cohort members regarding their reactions to the project were obtained. Of the half of the cohort who responded to the first questionnaire distributed at the start of the sophomore year, 89% had the impression that most of the people in the cohort were glad they were in it, 94% enjoyed reading the articles which had been distributed, 80% felt they had learned things about themselves by completing the questionnaires, 70% felt that they learned a lot about themselves from the progress reports, 96% hoped that they might continue to receive articles and progress reports, 99% indicated their willingness to continue filling out questionnaires, and 63% indicated that they could think of specific times when being in the Cohort was really helpful to them personally.

The specific written comments submitted by members of the cohort indicated that for at least some of them, the project objectives had been attained. Samples of their comments follow.

"Filling in these questionnaires helped me to sort out my real opinions on things which I might not have done otherwise."

"I feel that the questions were good because they made me think and respond exactly, in most instances, the way I feel. The questionnaires, in a strange sense, answered many questions I had about myself."

"They helped me understand myself better."

"I enjoy answering these questionnaires. I like to get them in the mail because I don't get very much mail and it is fun to get them. I especially like the friendliness of the letters accompanying them, they make it seem like they are concerned with my life which usually isn't the case in most instances concerning the University."

"I am amazed that you can think up questions that hit so close to home. Some of them seem to open me right up and steal my very thoughts. Keep up the good work."

"Cohort '72 helped me in that I saw that I was not alone in my problems in my freshman year. My roommate adjusted fairly easily and if I had only her to compare myself to, I would have felt terribly inferior. Cohort '72 gave me a chance to think about what was going on and it helped me realize things quicker (such as my relation to my parents). I gave the feedback sheets to my parents and they sort of realized what was going on, why I was depressed, and that I wasn't the only one."

"The Cohort had been helpful to me personally as a means to see and realize that I wasn't the only one having a rough freshman year. Just reading the problems of some of the others made me realize and understand some of my own."

"Several times the question sheets came at times of crisis for me (which seems to be often for Freshmen). Often times by sitting down and answering honestly the questions you asked about me, I was able to calm down and straighten things out in my own mind. This is what it did for me. It helped me to take a good look at lots of aspects of my life more realistically."

"Cohort made me feel as if I were part of a group in this huge impersonal campus. It is an overwhelming campus for a naive freshman. It made me evaluate my feelings and let me express opinions about C.U. and myself. I felt as if I was helping someone do something about confused freshmen. I mean that I hope this study will get to other sources in order to make the high school to college transition easier. I don't need Cohort this year like I did last year. I feel more secure and confident."

"Cohort gave me the opportunity to complain and get things off my chest rather than make a mountain out of a molehill. My little complaints weren't anything worth worrying about - they were typical of a freshman. But belonging to this program let me see that everyone else feels the same pressures, etc. and that other kids really did have <u>legitimate</u> problems. I mean pressures from home, drug problems, pressure from school, draft, things that didn't affect me personally, but instances I could learn from. I'll again express my sadness that this couldn't have been used on a wider scale. Again I'll state that a number of my friends really needed this. They had real problems but were not included in the group."

"When I arrived at C.U. a year and a half ago, I knew no one. As I am from a small upstate New York town I was frightened to be with so many unfamiliar faces. Through Cohort '72 I found, if only through questionnaires, people who were having similar problems and people who were interested in my feelings about school. In short, I feel Cohort '72 gave me the extra support to go out and find friends and adjust to college life at C.U."

Discussion

Examining this pilot project critically suggests two types of inadequacies. First, the use of volunteers as members of the cohort raises the distinct possibility that results appear more favorable than they would have had a random group of freshmen been members of the project. Second, there were a series of restrictions imposed on the pilot project because of limited resources that suggest that under better circumstances results might have been more favorable than those found in the pilot project. The time which intervened between completion of a questionnaire and the receipt of the feed-back report was much too long. The First Month questionnaire was distributed on October 10. Feed-back was not sent to cohort members until February. The Post-Vacation Questionnaire was distributed in early January. Feedback was not made available until March. No feed-back was provided at all for the Academic Pressure questionnaire or for the last questionnaire of the year. The pacing of the project should have been much more rapid and intense, involving perhaps a time delay of at most three weeks between questionnaire completion and

distribution of progress reports and involving the distribution of several additional questionnaires. Questionnaires should have been made much more reactive, with items or themes based on findings from earlier questionnaires. There are a wide variety of analyses of the data which could have been made and which would have been useful if properly presented. One example is the study of relationships between item responses or cluster scores on one questionnaire with those on subsequent questionnaires. Another example is longitudinal study of the cohort or sub-groups of the cohort across many questionnaires. Another example is changes over time in responses to identical items included periodically in various questionnaires.

On nearly every questionnaire room was provided for comments or suggestions. Many cohort members wrote notes and responses should have been routinely made, either by letter or phone call. About 20% of the cohort reported that they sent feedback reports to their parents. Copies could have been sent out to many other parents if an opportunity had been provided for students to make this request. In general, the entire preventive intervention program could have been intensified and personalized without sacrificing its fundamental economy of operation.

Evaluation of the project was hampered by failure to obtain adequate information from the comparison group members. Securing cooperation from control groups in this type of setting is difficult but alternative approaches need to be explored in order to be able to evaluate project effectiveness more comprehensively. It might be possible to utilize the residence hall advisors or the social leadership of the dormitory in

carrying out this task more satisfactorily. Additional evaluations of the project need to be undertaken, including the search of records of university caretaking agencies, disciplinary procedures, and police records. This data can be obtained and analyzed without compromising the confidentiality of the physician-patient or administrator-student relationship. It is, of course, difficult to judge how these pilot project inadequacies balance each other. But it is fairly clear what kinds of resources would be required to do the study with another group of freshmen in a manner which would meet most of these criticisms. Based on the experiences of the time required to do the pilot project, a half-time director, a full-time clerk-statistician and occasional part-time assistants should be able to implement and evaluate a considerably more satisfactory project with 500 randomly selected freshmen, identify a second group of 500 randomly selected freshmen to be the recipients of a more limited partial program and a third group of randomly selected freshmen to serve as a control group. Evaluation based on the analysis of three groups of students would be considerably more persuasive than one based on two groups, particularly when specific predictions could be made as to the relative effect on the three groups.

In spite of these inadequacies, the results of the pilot project are encouraging. It was clearly shown possible to engage a group of freshmen in the cohort project and to maintain their involvement. Only at the end of the academic year, when psychologically the burdens of freshman status no longer existed did participation begin to decrease. And even then, nearly 75% of the cohort was continuing to complete questionnaires. Fewer

than 15% of the cohort was ever seen in a face-to-face contact, and the modal number of contacts with these students was one. The kinds of emotional difficulties reported in the literature as characterizing college freshmen elsewhere were found in the cohort group and some members of the cohort reported that the project activities helped them deal with these difficulties. It may well be that self-reported prevalence of emotional disequilibrium in freshmen is a function of the resources allocated by the university in dealing with these difficulties. That is, if preventively-oriented programs are designed and effectively brought to students, the students will see usefulness rather than futility in expressing their own self-doubts and confusions and will use the program as a way of dealing with these problems. Based upon this pilot project there is some reason to believe that such an allocation of university resources will result in greater emotional maturation and a more successful college career for a large number of freshmen.

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Table 1. Student Status at Beginning of Sophomore Year: Cohort and Comparison Group by Sex

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cohort '72						
Enrolled at C.U.	60	85.7	93	85.3	153	85.5
Transferred	5	7.1	1	0.9	6	3.4
Dropped Out	5	7.1	15	13.8	20	11.2
Total	70	99.9	109	100.0	179	100.1
Comparison Group						
Enrolled at C.U.	205	79.8	248	75.6	453	77.4
Transferred	29	11.3	31	9.5	60	10.3
Dropped Out	23	8.9	49	14.9	72	12.3
Total	257	100.0	328	100.0	585	100.0

Table 2. Living Arrangements of Dropout and Transfer Students: Cohort and Comparison Group

	Living at Home		Away from Home		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cohort	12	46.2	14	53.8	26	100.0
Comparison	82	62.1	50	37.9	132	100.0